

Too many hardworking American families are looking for their next paycheck, and yet this Tea Party-led Republican Congress is wasting precious legislative time and energy on a purely partisan effort to generate conflict where none exists.

The Republicans' claims against Attorney General Holder defy belief. The simple fact is the Bush administration developed the inappropriate tactics, and once this Justice Department, under President Obama, learned about it, Attorney General Holder stopped the program—stopped it.

So instead of handling our Nation's priorities, this Tea Party-led Republican Congress is choosing to stick its head in the sand, ignoring the wide range of documents and open cooperation provided by the Justice Department but now engage in a game of political theater with no regard for struggling families across America.

The true motivation behind this contempt resolution is simple: As Leader PELOSI remarked last week, this is really about suppressing voter turnout. The National Rifle Association, unfortunately, has insisted that their supported Members of Congress vote for it or face political peril.

Let me tell you, these Tea Party Republicans don't like it when their ideological efforts to prevent people from voting get blocked by the Justice Department doing its job—and that's defending the Constitution of the United States. They know they can't win in judicial courts and they cannot win in the court of public opinion, so instead they're doing all they can to undermine the Justice Department by dragging Attorney General Holder through the mud, making endless demands, changing the goal posts, and monopolizing his time so that they can continue their efforts to undermine the democratic process. And they're asking for information that would violate the law. Furthermore, this is unprecedented. The House has never voted to hold an Attorney General in contempt.

Mr. Speaker, the American people are sick and tired of seeing these Tea Party Republicans pursue a senseless and destructive agenda. There's a reason that Congress has the lowest approval rating in history, and it has everything to do with efforts like this—a contempt vote that does nothing to improve the economy, does nothing to create jobs, and does nothing to strengthen our middle class or to help those trying to raise themselves out of poverty.

We need to invest in transportation, in education, and in ensuring above all that jobs and jobs and more jobs are added to our economic recovery. We only have a matter of weeks before Congress effectively shuts down for the August recess, and we cannot waste any more time doing anything other than putting Americans back to work. Jobs should be our number one priority, our number two priority, and our number three priority.

So I join my colleagues in the tri-caucuses calling for an end to this useless path of petty politics. Let us work during the remainder of time we have this congressional session to do the work that we were sent here to do. No more political witch hunts, no more political fishing expeditions, no more excuses. It's time to get back to work.

#### IMMIGRATION POLICY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. BARLETTA) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BARLETTA. Mr. Speaker, 2 weeks ago, two new words were added to the American immigration policy: "Prosecutorial discretion."

Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano recently ordered Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials to not deport certain classes of aliens who are in the country illegally. Instead, these illegal aliens will be given 2-year work permits that can be renewed indefinitely. The reason Secretary Napolitano and President Obama have given the American people for this de facto amnesty program is prosecutorial discretion.

The Secretary and the President claim that the Department of Homeland Security personnel can use their discretion to decide what individuals they can and cannot deport. But in Federal immigration law, this discretion does not exist. Congress took it away from the executive branch in 1996 when it passed the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act.

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The law requires, and I will repeat that, this law requires immigration officials to address illegal aliens when they become aware that they are in the country illegally. It clearly spells out the actions that must be taken by Federal officials.

In fact, according to one of the Nation's leading experts on immigration, Congress, frustrated at the time because the Clinton administration was using it to let thousands of illegal aliens remain in the United States, wrote the law to remove that discretion. In other words, the discretion that President Obama and Secretary Napolitano claim they use no longer exists because Congress deliberately eliminated it in 1996. By stating they still have it, President Obama and Secretary Napolitano are actually ordering Federal immigration officials to break the law.

Since the executive branch is citing a privilege that no longer exists in ordering Federal immigration officials to break the 1996 immigration act which was passed by Congress and signed into law, today, I'm calling on the Judiciary and Homeland Security Committees to hold hearings to investigate the legality of this decision to use so-called "prosecutorial discretion."

Just this week we heard from the United States Supreme Court that because the Federal Government writes immigration laws, State laws must work in harmony with the Federal Government. In striking down part of Arizona's S.B. 1070, the High Court's majority said that Federal law shall be the supreme law of the land when laws do not work in harmony with the Federal scheme or when Federal law is explicit. Well, in this case, the law is very clear: there is no prosecutorial discretion.

Now, Mr. Speaker, my district in Pennsylvania has one of the highest unemployment rates in the State, and our country is still reeling from one of the worst recessions we have ever faced. The Department of Homeland Security's unlawful action could have grave consequences on our labor force and on our economy, both at the local and national levels.

Additionally, allowing individuals with forged documents to remain in this country could pose a serious threat to our homeland security.

Let me also state that I am troubled by the expansion of the authority of the President that he believes he has. In the past, President Obama clearly stated he had to follow existing immigration laws. During a town hall meeting with Univision in March 2011, he said:

America is a Nation of laws, which means I, as the President, am obligated to enforce the law. I don't have a choice about that.

During that same town hall meeting, President Obama also said:

There are enough laws on the books by Congress that are very clear in terms of how we have to enforce our immigration system, that for me to simply, through executive order, ignore those congressional mandates would not conform with my appropriate role as President.

So what changed? In the last 15 months, did Congress grant the President new powers? I don't remember doing that. Fifteen months ago, President Obama said he can't ignore congressional mandates. But suddenly, 2 weeks ago, he can? Again, I ask, what changed?

I'm concerned President Obama overstepped his constitutional authority in this case, just as he did in claiming executive privilege in Operation Fast and Furious. That's why these two committees must hold formal hearings and investigate this claim of discretion and the unilateral rewriting of Federal immigration policy.

#### THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. BUTTERFIELD) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BUTTERFIELD. Mr. Speaker, the centerpiece of President Obama's 2008 Presidential campaign was the promise of health care reform. He told us, time and time again, that every President has seen the urgency of reform, that all of them had attempted reform, and none succeeded.